

spotlight

March/April 2015 \$2.50

american association of community theatre

Grand Rapids, MI

Number 1 travel destination
hosts AACTFest 2015

Working with a playwright
sharing a vision

Theatre Trends
box office operations

AACT Elections
meet the candidates

Downtown Grand Rapids from the Grand River



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Gary Walker
AACT President
2013-2015

Michael Fox with the Hale Centre Theatre in Utah and an AACT Board member recently sent me this note:

"It seems that with a movie or a book...artistic channels that are decidedly an individual experience...we desire – and even demand fresh ideas and stories. (Put aside our love for sequels.) However, when enjoying a live performance, be it symphonic, operatic, a favorite band or singer, or live theatre...artistic channels that are decidedly a group experience...we desire – and even demand ideas and stories we are already familiar with. Why?"

It is a thought many of us have probably had during season selection or when looking out at a less-than-full house for a new production that excites us artistically. But is it true? Do we, indeed, want familiar stories as an audience – and if so, why?

I know theatres that thrive on the new. A director friend of mine loved nothing more than to announce a season where the majority of his members had never heard of a single play. Yet the theatre was successful and played to great houses.

Do we, indeed, want familiar stories as an audience – and if so, why?

On one occasion, he sold season tickets without announcing the season (awaiting the rights to become available for the productions he wanted) and saw no decline in ticket sales.

Alternatively, I have had the experience of seeing a production that won both the Tony and the Pulitzer prizes play to less than satisfying houses. Keep in mind, this wasn't a well-known play, but it was clearly a quality script *and* a quality production. The local critics loved it. Why wasn't the house packed?

Have we trained our audiences to avoid the new and unknown? Is it the nature of audiences to need the comfort of 'knowing' a play before they see it? Have we created an environment where the audience feels they are going to a cultural event and need to be able to 'perform' as they feel they should?

In the end, perhaps we are asking the wrong question. Answering the negative is always tough. A better question is, "How do theatres premier new works *and* pack the house?" During AACT NewPlayFest, we saw numerous new productions that played to sold-out houses. What made these shows hits? Was it the nature of a specific audience? Advance preparation done by the theatre? Or some other factor or combination of factors? We may never know ...

What we do know is this: Mounting a successful season is always a challenge. We not only want great shows but great audiences enjoying them. That's our challenge every day – for both familiar shows and those our patrons haven't yet seen. And it's up to all of us as theatre managers, fans and board members to strike a balance between supporting new plays and playwrights, and reviving old favorites – each and every season.

Gary Walker



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Thanks to contributors in 2014

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AACT welcomes *Spotlight* input and requests for advertising rates. Contact David Cockerell at david@aact.org to submit content. Contact Darlene DeLorenzo at darlene@aact.org for advertising rates and specs. David and Darlene are also available at the phone numbers above.

On the Cover

Grand Rapids, Michigan, home of AACTFest 2015 this June, was named America's #1 Travel Destination by *Lonely Planet* in 2014. Photo courtesy of Experience Grand Rapids.

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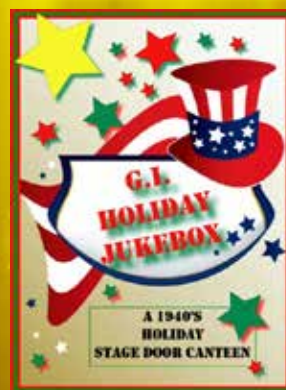
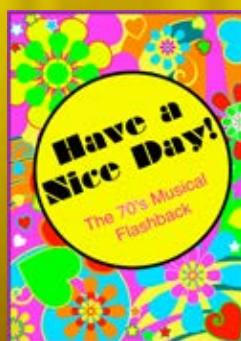
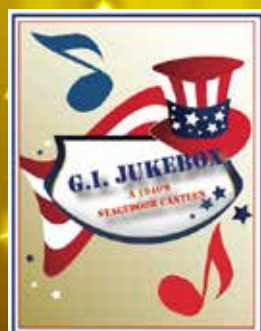
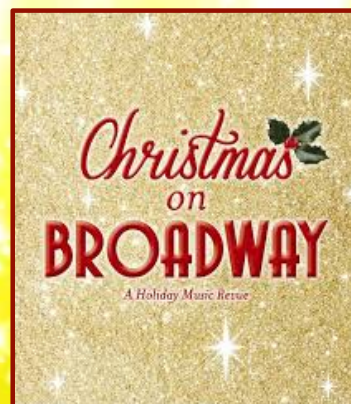
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Upcoming AACT Meetings

AACT Board

June 23 & 27

AACT Committees and Teams

June 22-24

AACT Region Reps and State Contacts

June 24

AACT Annual Membership Meeting

June 25

Grand Rapids, MI

Hosted by Grand Rapids Civic Theatre

Meetings are open. Contact the AACT office for details.

Upcoming Conferences

AACT Adjudication Workshop

June 23 - 27

Grand Rapids, MI

during AACTFest 2015

requires extra fee of \$135

AACT Community Theatre Management Conference

June 22-24

Grand Rapids, MI

just prior to AACTFest 2015

For information see page 18

Register for the AACT Adjudication Workshop when you register for AACTFest. Register for the AACT Community Theatre Management Conference at aact.org/conf. For more information contact the AACT office.

Thanks

to Ginger Heath and Metrolina Theatre Association for hosting the AACT Winter meetings in Charlotte, NC in February.

Corrections

to the January February 2015 Spotlight: In Moving On, the Alabama entry of 'night Mother was listed as a production of the Wetumpka Depot Players. The production is a co-production of Wetumpka Depot Players and South City Theatre.

Spotlight

Spotlight is published bimonthly by the American Association of Community Theatre for its members and is annually distributed to an expanded list of known community theatre organizations and interested individuals.

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AACT organizational members are eligible to participate in property, liability, and other coverages of the AACT Insurance Program.



For more information,
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Good Planning Provides for Better Premiums



by Ken Roberts

I have written previous articles in years past about the benefits of making your insurance program a priority by planning ahead. Nearly half of the theatres who contact me are up against a deadline to provide proof of insurance before they will be allowed to enter the doors of their performance venue, so I thought it would be prudent to reiterate the importance of making insurance a normal part of the planning process. By doing so, you will have more time and leverage to negotiate with insurance underwriters, which can result in lower premiums.

None of us like to be rushed, especially when it comes to things that are vitally important to the success of our endeavors.

None of us like to be rushed, especially when it comes to things that are vitally important to the success of our endeavors. This is just as true when it comes to underwriting insurance policies. To do the best job as accurately as

possible, an underwriter needs ample time to review all of the exposures of the organization, as well as the life safety features of the performance venue, to arrive at an insurance premium that is adequate for the amount of risk involved. The very heart of every insurance policy is *risk transfer*. Theatres transfer their own risks to an insurance company for a fee, and venue owners require it because they know that the insurance companies have deeper pockets than theatres have. While it is true that smaller theatre organizations usually have fewer risks than larger ones, if an underwriter isn't given enough time to properly determine the facts, they may be inclined to price a policy just as they would for a theatre with much greater risk exposures.

It is no more fair and equitable to charge a small theatre the same premium that a large theatre would pay, than it is to expect an insurance underwriter to know the difference between the two in less than 48 hours. This makes planning ahead for the insurance program essential to making sure that you don't pay more for an insurance policy than you should have to. As theatres, we don't just decide to produce a play that will be ready for performances the next day. We go through a detailed planning process of budgeting, auditions, rehearsals and set construction before we can be anywhere near ready to perform. Locating and securing the performance venue is one of the integral steps in that process as well. One of the very first issues to resolve with the venue should be their insurance requirements. By addressing those requirements early in the planning process, theatres stand the best chance of getting the fairest premium charge. ♦

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Welcome to AACTFest 2015 in Grand Rapids, Michigan



by Dani Martin

Named America's #1 Travel Destination by Lonely Planet in 2014, Grand Rapids is a lively, diverse city with the vibe of a vacation getaway. It boasts modernity and innovation alongside serene riverside beauty, providing a cultural experience for AACTFest attendees that's one-of-a-kind. If you're a fan of art, cuisine, history, or entertainment, you'll relish your stay in the River City.



The lobby of the Amway Grand Plaza awaits your arrival

The luxurious **Amway Grand Plaza** is the official hotel for AACTFest 2015. Enjoy the special AACTFest rate of \$129 for 1-4 in a room. Reserve online at resweb.passkey.com/go/AACT2015 or call (800) 253-3590 to reserve at the AACTFest rate. Reserve before May 22 to receive the special AACTFest rate.

Downtown Grand Rapids offers all kinds of opportunities for artistic adventure, including the Urban Institute for Contemporary Arts and the Grand Rapids Art Museum, both a stone's throw from the Amway Grand Plaza Hotel. The Grand Rapids Children's Museum provides a hands-on exploration of science, creativity, and the power of the imagination, certain to delight little ones and parents alike. Across the Gillett Bridge is Grand Rapids Public Museum, home of the Meijer Theater and the Roger B. Chaffee Planetarium, where visitors can dive into the rich history of Grand Rapids' cultural heritage. Special exhibitions taking place during AACTFest 2015 include "The Discovery of King Tut" at the Public Museum and "Mathias J. Alten, American Impressionist" at Grand Valley State University.



The Grand Rapids Art Museum is just a block from the theatre



The Urban Institute for Contemporary Arts



The Grand Rapids Children's Museum will delight children of all ages

Photos Courtesy of Experience Grand Rapids



The Japanese Gardens at the Frederik Meijer Gardens, opening June 2015

A short drive from downtown is the world-renowned Frederik Meijer Gardens. They will open their Japanese Gardens this summer. It is one of only two locations that host a 24-foot tall bronze horse by Leonardo da Vinci.



The magnificent bronze horse of Leonardo da Vinci at the Frederik Meijer Gardens

Catch a concert, film, or live performance at Dog Story Theater, a non-profit venue with a delightfully diverse event calendar. If you've got an interest in classic automobiles, Finish The Mission Veteran Relief Fund's annual Freedom Cruise classic car show runs June 24-28, and will include music, food, and beverages.



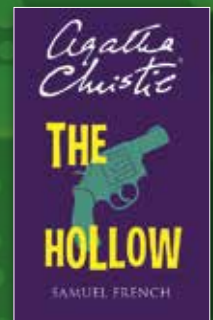
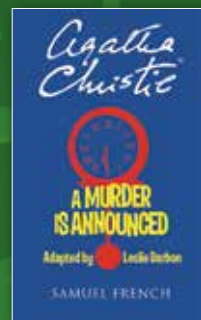
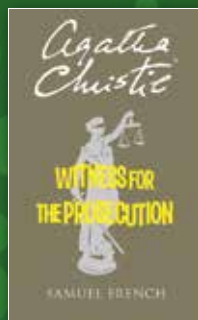
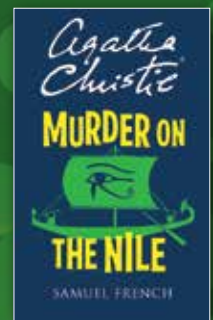
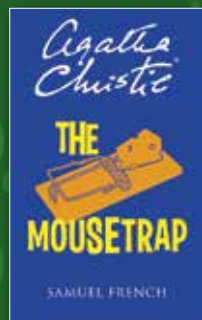
The annual Freedom Cruise classic car show will take place during AACTFest 2015

Dining is serious business in Grand Rapids, where you can find everything from gourmet chophouses to funky fusion fare. The Amway Grand Plaza Hotel serves up several delectable options of its own, such as the bistro-style cuisine of Bentham's Riverfront Restaurant and the gourmet, Latin-inspired flavors of Cygnus 27. Real Food Café is a home-cooked diner so popular with the locals that it can sometimes be difficult to score a table for breakfast—but their Nutella French toast and corned beef hash are worth the

continued on next page

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wait, we've heard. There's also San Chez - which was named one of America's Top 50 Hispanic restaurants - and Bartertown Diner, where everything is certified Fair Trade and organic. The oldest operating bar and restaurant in downtown Grand Rapids is the Cottage Bar & Restaurant, known for casual charm and having the city's best burgers.

Dining experiences range from upscale to casual



AACTFest 2015
Grand Rapids, MI
June 23 - 28, 2015
aact.org/15

Caddy-corner from the towering contemporary architecture of the Van Andel Arena is The B.O.B. (an acronym for Big Old Building), an entertainment center that combines five restaurants, a nightclub, a comedy club, a sportsbar, and a bottle cellar. If you prefer bringing the culinary experience home to your hotel room, the Grand Central Market & Deli and the Downtown Market Hall make it easy to browse through farm-fresh produce and creations from artisan delicatessens, bakers, and chocolatiers.



The B.O.B. hosts a variety entertainment and dining



The Downtown Market offers many shopping options

For a weekend pick-me-up, head to the Grand Rapids Coffee Roasters' Saturday Experience, an open house featuring free coffee and tea samples and the opportunity to have custom blends and roasts made to your specifications. If craft beer is more your style, Grand Rapids is home to more than 30 microbreweries, with Founders Brewery and Brewery Vivant hosting tours of their facilities every weekend. For a full tasting of what's been called "Beer City, USA," book a day of refreshment with Grand Rapids Beer Tours, where you'll be provided with a chauffeur and behind-the-scenes demonstrations from some of Michigan's best brewers.



Experience Grand Rapids Ambassadors are available to assist you

Grand Rapids is known as friendly, affordable, and safe. When downtown or at the airport, you will notice persons dressed in uniforms of blue/green. These are Tourists Ambassadors who can give you recommendations and directions.

To see a comprehensive guide to everything this beautiful, bustling city has to offer, visit Experience Grand Rapids at experiencegr.com.



AACTFest 2015 promises to be a blockbuster event. Registration and more information are available at aact.org/15.

TOP 10 LA THEATRE PRODUCTIONS FROM 2014

-HUFFINGTON POST



"Want to know what the 10 most popular Southern funeral casseroles are? Find out in our newest comedy, **A SOUTHERN BELLE PRIMER (OR WHY PRINCESS MARGARET COULD NEVER BE A KAPPA KAPPA GAMMA)**."

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More AACTFest 2015 Workshops

Workshops are an important part of the national festival in Grand Rapids, Michigan. The workshops below have been added since the last *Spotlight*. Find a complete list of workshops for AACTFest 2015 at aact.org/15.

Administrative

New Ideas in Senior Theatre

Bonnie L. Vorenberg, Senior Theatre Resource Center
From directing to creating new programs, Senior Theatre in Community Theatres continues to grow and flourish. Find out how you can contribute to the field.

Ticketing Basics for Serving Patrons with Disabilities

Jon Skaalen, VSA Minnesota
Comply with the new ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act) regulations. Tips in this workshop (developed by the Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts) will share specific customer service practices, forms, publicity, terminology, etiquette, and other options that will make you and your customers comfortable and ready to enjoy the show.

Artistic

Directing Older Actors

Bonnie L. Vorenberg, Senior Theatre Resource Center
Directing older actors can be an extremely rewarding experience, especially if you learn some basic techniques and adaptations.

Playwriting - Is It For Me?

Jim Danek
A spirited conversation regarding the history of plays, playwrights, and the concept that anyone, with a bit of encouragement, can forge ahead with an idea that eventually could become a fully realized production. ♦



AACTFest Myth

Festivals are just the shows. I can see most of those anywhere.

by Murray Chase, AACT Executive Vice President

That's just not true. You can learn as much—or as little—at a festival as you wish. At the national AACTFest, there is always a wealth of workshops, plenty of opportunity for networking and friendships, and deal-making accessibility to vendors. That holds true for almost all regional and state festivals, as well.

I've been participating and attending festivals for more than 25 years. I've never come away from one without learning something valuable that I could implement in my own work. From the management conferences to the shows to the workshops, the experiences are invariably educational and enriching.

Don't feel that you need more knowledge? Well, frankly then, you need the knowledge that you need the knowledge. ♦



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- Nolte Arts District.com
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- Tucson Times
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- Harlingen American Weekly
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- Stage Happenings

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Your Contributed Items Will Add to the Silent Auction Fun

Contributing to the fun of the national festival are the fundraisers conducted by the AACT Endowment Trustees. Even if you can't attend the festival, you are urged to contribute a special item to the Silent Auction to be held at AACTFest in Grand Rapids, MI in June.

Most any items of value will be accepted, but best sellers in the past have included:

- Jewelry, theatre-related or otherwise
- Works of art, theatre-related or otherwise
- Celebrity items of a unique nature
- Specialty props, costume items
- Subscriptions, gift certificates, play royalties, etc.
- Packages, including t-shirts, books, theatre-related gifts

The Festival will also be enlivened by a People's Choice Award competition and a raffle. New in 2015, the People's Choice Awards allow company fans and festival attendees to vote with their pocketbooks for their favorite company, actor, and actress. One dollar buys one vote. Voting can be done at the festival or in advance online. Fans do not have to attend the festival to vote.

The AACT Endowment Trustees raise endowment funds for two purposes: to sustain the mission and longevity of AACT and to provide travel assistance to the performing companies representing

their regions at the national festival. Proceeds from the Silent Auction will go into the AACT Endowment Mission Fund and those from the People's Choice Awards and the raffle will benefit the Travel Fund.

The twelve companies participating in the national AACTFest 2015 will each receive \$2370 to help cover expenses of traveling to the festival.

Please send items for the Silent Auction by June 22 to: AACT Silent Auction, Attn: Mary Jo DeNolf, Grand Rapids Civic Theatre, 30 N Division Ave, Grand Rapids, MI 49503-3192.

You may also bring items with you to the festival. Deliver to the Grand Rapids Civic Theatre Tuesday afternoon or drop them off at the Festival Registration desk in the hotel on Tuesday. In order to prepare bid sheets, etc., we need to know by June 15 what you intend to contribute. Please email info@aact.org a description of the items you are sending, their value, the method you intend to use for delivery, and when they will arrive. You may find it helpful to download the Auction Contribution form from the AACT website, aact.org or request one from the AACT office. ♦

Questions? Contact the AACT office at 866-OurAACT (687-2228) or info@aact.org.

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Moving On

Theatres recently selected to represent their states in AACTFest 2015. Some states qualify to send two shows to the regional festival.

Reg	State	Theatre	From	Production
II	MD	Colonial Players	Annapolis	<i>Tough Cookies</i>
II	MD	Port Tobacco Players	La Plata	<i>Superhero Sanitarium</i>
IV	MS	Tupelo Community Theatre	Tupelo	<i>Lone Star</i>
IV	MS	Starkville Community Theatre	Starkville	<i>A Catered Affair</i>

Announcing AACTFest 2017

The AACT Board of Directors has selected Rochester, MN as the site of AACTFest 2017. The national community theatre festival will be held June 26 – July 1, 2017.

AACTFest 2017, the culmination of a two-year cycle of state and regional theatre festivals across the country, will present twelve community theatre productions, as well as a theatre management conference, educational workshops, and top theatre vendor displays. AACT Conference Coordinator Jill Patchin said, "AACT is thrilled to be heading to Rochester, MN for AACTFest 2017. The participating companies, along with individuals attending, will find the city of Rochester an exciting city to visit and the Rochester Civic Theatre a warm and inviting venue to showcase their productions."

Rochester is proud to be the home of Mayo Clinic, the first and largest integrated, not-for-profit group practice in the world. Doctors from every medical specialty work together to care for patients under the philosophy of "the needs of the patient come first."



Downtown Rochester reflected in south Silver Lake

Workshops and meetings will be in the Mayo Civic Center with performances to be in the Rochester Civic Theatre, which is in the Mayo Civic Center complex.

Rochester is the state's third-largest city, with a population of 110,00 friendly Midwesterners. The Mayo Civic Center's downtown location offers visitors easy access to hotels, restaurants, shopping and entertainment, whether they take the street, skyway, or underground climate controlled walkway. With unique traits that set it apart from other Midwest meeting hubs, Rochester is currently undergoing expansion. The Mayo Civic Center is making some major renovations scheduled to open just in time for AACTFest 2017. ♦



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Community Theatre Management Conference

June 22-24, 2015
Grand Rapids, MI

The National Community Theatre Management Conference will be held June 22-24 just prior to AACTFest 2015 at the Amway Grand Plaza Hotel in Grand Rapids, MI.



Norman Ussery

Norman Ussery will facilitate the conference. Norman currently serves as Executive Director of Theatre Arlington, in Arlington, TX. Norman was raised in the Virgin Islands where he worked in several theatres and was co-founder of St. Thomas' Pistarckle Theatre. He graduated from Duke University and has worked at Twin City Stage in Winston-Salem, NC, Theatre Tallahassee in Tallahassee, FL and the North Carolina Theatre in Raleigh, NC. His background includes management in both professional and community theatres. In addition to theatre management he has worked extensively as an actor and a director, mostly in the southeastern United States.

The Community Theatre Management Conference (CTMC) is modeled after the renowned National Full Time Community Theatre Directors Conference (often called the "Madison Conference"), and is for anyone with responsibility for managing a community theatre. This educational gathering brings together administrators from

all levels of theatre. From the volunteer who "runs things around here" to the "just starting" part-time administrator to the full time professional manager... all are welcome. Learning is through a series of intensive, topic specific, round table discussions with participants sharing experiences - both problems and solutions. Participants will prioritize and suggest topics through a pre-conference questionnaire.

The Community Theatre Management Conference can send you home with ideas that will pay for your trip, a renewed enthusiasm for your theatre management job, and a nationwide network of colleagues! And because the CTMC will be held immediately preceding the national festival in Grand Rapids, you can attend two events in one trip. ♦

Registration Fee

\$270 AACT Member

\$345 non-member

\$50 early bird discount if register by May 5

Covers all sessions, materials, snacks, and a copy of *Boards in the Spotlight* by Twink Lynch

Hotel: Amway Grand Plaza

\$129 (plus tax) 1-4 in room

Registration information and more details available at aact.org/conf or the AACT office (toll free) 866-OurAACT (687-2228).

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The AACT Endowment Trustees established the AACT Legacy Society to accept current and planned gifts, give donors designations for their gifts, and clarify how donated funds are managed.

The focus of the Trustees is to provide for long-term sustainability of AACT's mission, and to support theatre participation in national festivals. AACT Legacy Society funds are managed by the AACT Endowment Board of Trustees, who oversee the investment and growth of the funds. The Mission and Festival funds are separate and have independent investment, spending, and accounting policies.

Help the AACT Endowment continue to make a difference to community theatres across the nation.

With a \$5,000 cash donation, pledge, or inclusion of the AACT Endowment as a beneficiary in your estate planning, you can become a member of this visionary society, and your gift will create a legacy that assures sustainability for current and future AACT programs. May 1, 2015 is the deadline to be listed as a Legacy Society Founder.

You choose the designation of your Legacy gift:

AACT MISSION & Long Term Sustainability

The mission of AACT is to foster and encourage the development of, and commitment to, the highest standards of excellence in production, management, governance, community relations, and service by community theatres.

This fund will assist in providing leadership and networking opportunities; make available services, publications, programs, meetings, and other activities to meet the needs of nonprofit community theatres; and provide a national voice for community theatre.

FESTIVAL Support for AACT member companies to participate in AACTFest national festivals

This fund makes the AACTFest biennial national festival of community theatre more accessible to all interested theatres by providing travel expense support.

The AACT Endowment Fund was established in 1985. Since 1991, participating companies of every national festival have received travel grants.

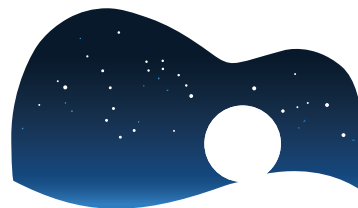
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For details contact Julie Crawford, Executive Director
American Association of Community Theatre
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Getting More From the Playwright When Directing A Play

by Rob Urbinati

Communicating with playwrights can be extremely helpful, and getting in touch with them is easier than you may think. The playwright can be an extremely valuable resource for directors.

Directing a Published Play

When working on a published play, directors generally assume that they can have no contact with the playwright. But in fact, it's possible for a director to approach the writer of a published play with questions. Contact information for certain playwrights, often an email address, is available on line. If not, the director can contact the writer's agent who will ask their client if he or she is willing to talk with the director, and how that discussion can be arranged. If a director doesn't know who represents the playwright, the Dramatists Guild will provide that information, if the writer is a member.

"Hello, Rob, I heard you had some questions about my play."

A while ago when I directed Terrance McNally's *The Master Class* for Queens Theatre, I had questions about the published version of the script. I had seen the Broadway production, and remembered it vividly, particularly how the underscoring music was used. But the published version of the play did not match my memories.

I was able to learn who represented Mr. McNally through the publishers, and contacted his agent. I mentioned that I had questions about discrepancies between the Broadway production and the published version of the play. I asked his agent if it would be possible to speak to Mr. McNally. She said she would get back to me. Instead, to my surprise, I received a telephone call a few days later. It was Terrance McNally. He said, "Hello, Rob, I heard you had some questions about my play." He was open, friendly and informative, and answered all of my questions. It was a satisfying and productive chat.

Many playwrights are very accessible. They enjoy talking about their work with directors, even after the play

has been published. That being said, it's important not to assail a willing playwright with questions. Some playwrights are more "hands-off" than Mr. McNally, and not available for discussion. But it's worth a try.

As a published playwright, I enjoy talking with directors of my plays. When I receive an email notification from Samuel French of a new production of *West Moon Street* or *Death By Design*, I often email the theatre, let them know that I'm delighted they are producing my play and that they shouldn't hesitate to ask me any questions before or during rehearsals. I've had many invigorating discussions with directors. Some of these chats have developed into relationships with theatres. I'm currently Artistic Adviser for Houston Family Arts Center, a position that grew out of exactly this type of discussion.

Directing a New Play

When a theatre is producing a new play, the director should reach out to the playwright. Even if a play is not a premiere, if it hasn't been published, the work is still in development and the playwright is often still in the process of shaping it. In-person discussions are preferred if the playwright is local, but Skype or telephone conversations are fine if the director is out of town. Email exchanges are not ideal for this type of discussion. There is no limit to the amount of time the playwright and director can spend discussing the play in the weeks or months preceding rehearsal.

Email exchanges are not ideal for this type of discussion

Playwrights may want to discuss the play's overall tone, mood and environment. Directors may want to hear what inspired the play. Important or challenging moments should be discussed in detail. These conversations should proceed with the understanding that the play is not a "product" - it's the playwright's "baby," and must be handled with care.

The director should be very careful about requesting rewrites, unless there is an outright error in the script or the playwright encourages these suggestions. If a director is confused about any aspect of the script, it's best to frame remarks as questions. For example, "Why does she leave the room when he enters?" is better than a remark such as, "It doesn't make sense to me that she leaves the room when he enters."

Directors should be sensitive to what makes this particular play different from any other play.

In traditional, naturalistic plays, clarification of any confusion is necessary before rehearsal. But directors should be careful not to ask irrelevant questions of the playwright, which might suggest that the director doesn't understand the play. In many contemporary plays, character motivation and even plot elements are intentionally ambiguous – that's part of their quality. Directors should be sensitive to what makes this particular play different from any other play, and shape the discussion accordingly. They should proceed with the genuine conviction that the play is distinct.

While most playwrights prefer to be involved in the developmental process of new work, other writers would rather hand their play over to a director without discussion. This can be a useful way for playwrights to see if their intentions are communicated clearly in the text, particularly if they attend the production. However, this is the

playwright's prerogative. Directors of new plays should never refuse to discuss the work if the playwright wants to chat – and they usually do! ♦

Rob is a freelance director and playwright based in New York City, Director of New Play Development at Queens Theatre, Literary Manager of The Private Theatre, and Artistic Adviser for Houston Family Arts Center. In New York, he has directed for The Public Theater, Classic Stage Company, York Theatre, The Culture Project, Abingdon Theatre, Pearl Theatre, Ensemble Studio Theatre, Cherry Lane Theatre, and New York University, as well as theatres and universities across the country. Rob's plays as a writer include Hazelwood Jr. High, West Moon Street, and Death By Design, all published by Samuel French, and Rebel Voices and The Queen Bees, which will also be published by Samuel French. His book, Play Readings: A Complete Guide for Theatre Practitioners will be published by Focal Press in 2015.

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AACT Elections: Meet the Candidates

Ballots will be mailed in April for the annual AACT election, with each voting member receiving one ballot to be returned by May 1. (Associate Members are non-voting.)

The Nominating Committee has prepared a slate it feels is representative of the membership, and provides the organization with skills and knowledge needed to conduct the affairs and further the mission of AACT.

Following are bios of this year's candidates. See page 27 for a list of those who are continuing on the Board and the Nominating Committee. Be sure to watch for and return your ballot before May 1.

Officers

To serve two-year terms for 2015-2017

President



Murray Chase (Venice, FL – Region IV) has been the Executive/Artistic Director at Venice Theatre (FL) for the past nineteen years. Currently he serves as AACT Executive Vice President, as an Endowment Trustee, and as a Festival Commissioner. Past service includes board membership for the Sarasota Arts Council

(cultural executives chair), Mississippi Theatre Association (MTA) (community theatre chair), Florida Theatre Conference (FTC) (community theatre chair), and Southeastern Theatre Conference (SETC) (community division chair, festival chair). He has been honored with the Artistic Leadership Award from Sarasota Arts Council; 7-time Best Director Award at MTA, FTC, and SETC; Distinguished Career Award from FTC, Art Cole Award from AACT, and membership in AACT's Fellows. AACT members also may know Venice Theatre as the host of AACT WorldFest (2010, 2014, 2018), America's international community theatre festival. Murray and his wife Lori are long-time joyful empty nesters, whose grandchildren are all teenagers and therefore much more expensive.

Executive Vice President



Carole Ries (Topeka, KS - Region V) has theatre as her first love - whether it is management, acting, directing, or producing. She has been involved with AACT since 1979, helping to prepare for FACT '79 (a precursor to AACTFest). She was a member of three state associations, Tennessee, Florida, and Kansas. She received

a Distinguished Service Award in 1995 from the Florida Theatre Conference, Children/Youth Theatre Division. On the national level, Carole chaired the AACT Workshop Committee and served as Vice President of Public Relations, where she led the effort to develop a new brand for AACT. She was selected to become an AACT Fellow in 2009. Carole currently serves as the chair of the AACT Endowment Trustees, as a Festival Rep, and on the Task Force for Senior Theatre.

Carole is retired from theatre management, most recently as the President and CEO of the Topeka Civic Theatre & Academy.

Vice President for Festivals



Kay Armstrong (Dallas, TX - Region VI) has been an AACT Board Member for sixteen years. Kay, as Vice President for Festivals, serves on the AACT Finance Committee and Festival Commission. She trained with Annette Procnier and has adjudicated in Wisconsin, Mississippi, Nebraska, Missouri,

Ohio, Texas, Southeastern Theatre Conference, and Region IV. Kay has served as Festival Commissioner in Kentucky, Indiana, Maine, Missouri, Nebraska, Wyoming, Illinois, Maryland, Ohio, Regions I, III, IV, and X. In her ten years as Executive Director of the Oklahoma Community Theatre Association, Kay coordinated five state and two regional festivals. She supervised creation of a playwriting competition, youth conference, and traveling board development seminar, and sat on the Oklahoma Arts Council's Grants Committees and Oklahoma Art Institute's Theatre Selection Panel. Kay was Vice President of Conferences for Southwest Theatre Association. She co-founded a community theatre in Glenview, Illinois and was Business Manager for Contemporary Theatre of Dallas for three years. She coordinated dance fests and performance events for the Dance Council of North Texas for two years. Kay has conducted numerous workshops for state, regional, and national organizations. She has loved live theatre since age three and takes pride in her daughter who teaches middle school theatre. Kay also takes pride in her induction as an AACT Fellow in 2011.

Treasurer



Michael Fox (North Salt Lake, UT - Region VII) began his theatre career at StageStop and at Bear River High in northern Utah. He attended Southern Utah University (home of the Tony-award winning Utah Shakespeare Festival) on a performance scholarship, and

earned a BS in Business Finance from University of Phoenix. He has used his talents as an accompanist, choreographer, director, singing dancer, light board operator, sound engineer and stage manager at a myriad of venues. He uses these experiences and his degree as Director of Operations for Hale Centre Theatre in Salt Lake going on thirteen years. He has served as a missionary and lay clergy for his church, as President of Intermountain Ticketing Professionals (Utah branch of INTIX) and proudly serves as a Board Member at Large for AACT. He was named one of thirty Professionals of the Year by Musical America in 2014. He has a beautiful wife of nearly nineteen years who cares for him and their puppy, Bear. He is a major foodie, loves to sit at the piano and sing with his wife, and loves any form of great dialog.

served on the Board of Trustees for the Theatre Association of New York State (TANYS) since 1997, including a term as President. His other board service includes the Auburn Players Community Theatre, Skaneateles Summer Theatre, Pointes of Faith Dancers, and Auburn Public Theatre. Bob is a trained TANYS roving adjudicator as well as being one of two technical adjudicators. He has been pleased to adjudicate state festivals in Pennsylvania and Maryland. Bob has performed as Technical Director for the TANYS Festival for years and also Technical Director for the national festival, AACTFest 2011. In 2008 he initiated the "BMI Supply, Inc. Design Competition and Exhibition" where designers and technicians can show off their work at the annual TANYS Festival. Bob lives in Skaneateles, New York with his wife (a stage manager) and his 3 daughters (a stage manager, an actress and a lighting technician). His son and daughter-in-law live nearby and are content sitting in the audience!

Members at Large

An AACT bylaw change increases the number of Members at Large beginning in June 2015. Four will serve three-year terms, and one each will serve a two-year term and a one-year term.



Bob Frame (Skaneateles, NY - Region II) graduated State University of New York, Oswego in 1977 with his BA in Technical Theatre. He is now Director of Theatre Operations at Cayuga Community College in Auburn, New York as well as a free-lance lighting designer, director, and actor. During his thirty-five year career he has won numerous awards for his work in theatre. He has



Liz Lydic (El Segundo, CA - Region VIII) is proud to be a current member of the AACT Board of Directors, and serves on the AACT Festival Commission, Governance Committee, and the Membership Services Team. She has worked in various administrative capacities at theatres nationwide, including Steppenwolf Theatre Company, Lookingglass Theatre Company, and Center Theatre Group. She also served as the Festival Coordinator for the National Asian American Theatre Conference and Festival in 2011, which was hosted in

continued on next page

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Los Angeles. Liz is passionate about community theatre, and has been actively involved since her youth. Most notably, she serves as the bookkeeper at the Long Beach Playhouse, where she previously worked as the Business and Operations Manager. Liz is currently helping spearhead the California state festival for the 2015 AACTFest cycle, to be hosted by the Long Beach Playhouse. She enjoys being an ambassador for AACT; one of her missions is to introduce all the theatres in California to the inspiring people and opportunities of AACT. Liz works for the City of Hermosa Beach, and lives in the South Bay area of Los Angeles with her husband, Stephen, who is an actor and theatre educator. They are enjoying being new parents to their baby, Ramona.



Sal Jones (Lexington, MA - Region I) is currently the Artistic Director, producer and a founding member of The Lexington Players and the YouthStage Drama Program. Sal holds a BA in Theater and Communication from Monmouth University in New Jersey and has over twenty-five years of community theatre experience. During this time period, Sal has served as Board

member and President of the Windsor Jesters of Connecticut and The Lexington Players of Massachusetts. He has also served two terms as the Executive Vice President of the Eastern Massachusetts Association of Community Theaters (EMACT). Sal began his experience in community theatre as an actor but has spent most of his theatre time directing and producing over fifty productions. As Artistic Director, Sal

has been responsible for overseeing The Lexington Players' participation in many EMACT/AACT theatre festivals, a few of which resulted in winning awards. Sal is also responsible for creating the YouthStage Drama Program, which produces three to four productions a year utilizing children ages eight to fifteen. He has lived in Lexington, Massachusetts for over twenty years, is married with two adult children and has just adopted a new puppy, Fiona.



Chad-Alan Carr (Gettysburg, PA - Region II) serves as the Founding Executive/Artistic Director for the Gettysburg Community Theatre (GCT), a nonprofit organization dedicated to training, education, and performing opportunities for all ages. Originally from Houston, Texas, Chad received his training from his mentor Mrs. Bennie Nipper who is a long time AACT member at

Bay Area Harbour Playhouse in Dickinson, Texas. With over 200 productions to his name, Chad has been involved in community, educational, touring, and professional theatres across the country for over twenty years including a cast/crew credit in the 50th Anniversary Broadway National Tour of the musical *Singin' In The Rain*, with which he toured 46 states plus Canada. Chad serves on the board of Pennsylvania Association of Community Theatres, Eastern States Theatre Association, and is a proud member of AACT, and the Educational Theatre Association. He has been awarded a Distinguished Theatre Alumni Award from Sam Houston State University for Achievement in Professional Theatre and an International Honor Thespian Award. Chad most recently directed the Eastern States regional premiere of *The Penguin Project* (a theatre program for youth with



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Cast: 5 Female, 2 Male

Length: Two Acts

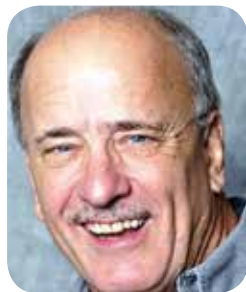
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special needs) for a production of *Disney's Peter Pan jr.* Currently Chad is living his dream running GCT in historic downtown Gettysburg, Pennsylvania.



Richard Gannon (Naperville, IL - Region III) holds a BA in English from the University of Illinois at Champaign-Urbana and pursued graduate studies in Theatre at Northern Illinois University before earning an MBA in Operations Management from the University of Minnesota. Following a brief teaching stint, Rich joined the staff at Paper Moon Productions, a scenic design,

construction, installation, and services firm based in Niles, Illinois with a client list including Marriott's Lincolnshire Theatre, Pheasant Run Playhouse, the Drury Lane Theatres, and many top Chicago-area theatres. Rich later held key management positions in the exhibit design and services industry for firms in Minnesota and Illinois. Rich has been a member of Grove Players in Downers Grove, Illinois for forty-one years and has held nearly every board position for that group. He was a co-founder of the Downers Grove Arts Council and was Grove Players' liaison with the West Suburban Theatre Connection, a marketing cooperative that served for profit and nonprofit theatres. Rich currently serves as the Illinois State Contact for AACT and serves on a number of AACT committees. Rich is a board member of the Illinois Theatre Association, representing the community theatre division, and chaired the ITA Community Theatre Festival last October. Rich and his wife, Nanci, met during a production of *Kiss Me, Kate!*, started dating during *Oklahoma!*, and married during rehearsals for *Brigadoon*.



Sharon Burum (Duncan, OK - Region VI) has worked with Duncan Little Theatre (DLT) for the past twenty-four years, serving on the board of directors, and on the Oklahoma Community Theatre Association board for over fifteen years (serving twice as President), the Southwest Theatre Association, and Simmons Center Theatre Board. She has directed over fifty-eight

productions, was the founding director of Teen Theatre, and has presented at several youth conferences. She was an educator for over twenty-five years, teaching drama in high school and middle school in Texas and Oklahoma. She studied at the Oklahoma Arts Institute with Ed Sherrin, Gitta Honneiger, Michael Toledo, and Stephen Kanee. Presently she directs at Hodgsons' Studio of Music and Drama. She has a degree in Theatre Arts from Texas Tech University and a M.Ed. from Cameron University. Her honors include DLT Lifetime Achievement Award and an Oklahoma Governor's Arts Award in 2010. She is active in United Way, American Association of University Women, Chisholm Trail Arts Council, Chamber of Commerce, and the First Christian Church. She and her husband Randy love to visit their daughter Kate and cheer for the OU Sooners. Sharon likes to travel, read, oil paint, and play with her watchdog Rolex.

more candidates on next page



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Nominating Committee

Two to be elected to serve two-year terms for 2015-2017



Marsha L. Amato-Greenspan

(Wilmington, DE - Region II) holds a BA in Theatre with a concentration in Acting and Directing from Averett University in Danville, Virginia. She is the current President of The Barnstormers (Pennsylvania's oldest continuously operating community theatre) in Ridley Park, Pennsylvania. In addition to serving on the AACT Festival Commission, Marsha

serves as Vice President of Festivals for PACT (Pennsylvania Association of Community Theatres) and President for ESTA (Eastern States Theatre Association). As with many people, there was a time where she considered pursuing a life in professional theatre; however she has found that volunteer work in community theatre provides a truly rewarding experience. She believes strongly that along with the education system, community theatres have a responsibility to teach and foster those who want to learn all aspects of the craft of theatre. Ms. Amato-Greenspan has over forty years experience in community theatre and has worked as a director, actress, administrator, adjudicator, and techie (basically anything and everything) at community theatres in Delaware, Virginia, Massachusetts, and Pennsylvania, including the Philadelphia Fringe Festival. A strong supporter and producer of new works, she has directed the original cast versions of now published plays *Replay* and *Our Place*, as well as the original full length production of *Shakespeare in the Trailer Park*. She has received awards both on the state and regional level for acting, directing, technical, and sound design. Marsha lives with her husband Jeff and their cat Mags in Wilmington, Delaware where she is a Vice President with Bank of America's Enterprise Postal Execution and Operations team specializing in address quality and postal project management. Ms. Amato-Greenspan is on the Mail Systems Management Association (MSMA) National Board and utilizes her postal skills as a regular speaker for MAILCOM conferences and assisting community theatres in understanding the intricacies of postal requirements for mailing.



Scott Bloom (Silver Springs, MD – Region II) has been involved in community theatre for nearly forty years. He has won awards as an actor, director, producer, designer, and playwright, and has worked with, and continues to be associated with over a dozen professional and community theatre companies in the Washington, DC metropolitan area. He is a founding board member

of the Maryland Community Theatre Festival Association, and is on the Board of ESTA (Eastern States Theatre Association), (AACT Region II). Former AACT Vice President for Membership, he served on the board and committees for more than ten years, has been on the Resource Roster nearly as long, and has been instrumental in helping AACT consolidate and modernize its web presence. For twenty years, with his own nonprofit, The Theatre Pages, Inc., he has been providing free website hosting and email services to arts groups and artists, including the Maryland, Pennsylvania, and Region II organizations. He keeps a large and continually growing library of resources and links, and a running bulletin board of regional activities on the home page. By day he is a Computer and Network Systems Consultant supporting a very large Government Agency. Whatever time is not devoted to work or theatre he spends creating music using various electronics devices to shape and record it. He is also a pretty good cook according to his wife (Jan) of more than thirty-one years.



Beverley Lord (Foxborough, MA – Region I) majored in theatre in college. During her junior year abroad in Paris, she studied acting at the Ecol de Rene Simon. Her career as a high school French teacher also included directing musicals. She served several years on the Foxborough Arts Council. Bevie is on the Committee of Public Action for the Arts in Boston. She

performs with and volunteers for Bay Colony Productions at the Orpheum in Foxborough and with the Friendly Society of Weston, second oldest amateur theatre company (founded January 12, 1885) in the United States. She serves on the board of directors of the New England Theatre Conference (NETC) where she chairs the Marie Philips Service to NETC Award and adjudicates plays and musicals for the Moss Hart Award. She is the NETC, Region I Rep on the AACT Board and has served twice as a delegate to the International Amateur Theatre Association World Congress & Festival in Monaco. Still involved in education, Bevie has chaired and continues to serve on the Foxborough School Committee.



Jim Sohre (Las Vegas, NV - Region VIII) has directed or served as music director for more than 150 productions including *Les Miserables*, *Hairspray*, *The Producers*, *The Drowsy Chaperone*, *The Sound of Music*, *Lucky Stiff*, *Thoroughly Modern Millie*, *Victor/Victoria*, *The Wizard of Oz*, and many others. Many recent productions were at Heidelberg Roadside Theatre

and Kaiserslautern KMC Onstage while Jim served as the Army Europe Command Entertainment (Theatre and Music) Director before his retirement from Army Entertainment after 40 years of service. He has a Bachelor of Arts in Music from the University of Wisconsin and a Master's Degree in Theatre from Tulsa University. He has received multiple awards from the U.S. Army for his work improving the quality of life for soldiers throughout Europe, and from AACT for promotion and development of the highest standards for community theatre. He was recently honored with a dedicated chair at the National Theatre in Washington, DC. Jim also has a passion for opera and travels Europe and the U.S. to review productions for the acclaimed internationally known online magazine *Opera Today*. He serves as Production and Young Artists Program Coordinator for Opera Las Vegas, for which he recently devised and directed *A Passion for Puccini*, an evening of staged arias and scenes in the Smith Center, Las Vegas' premier cultural venue. He is a founding member of the city's Valley Theatre Awards program for which he adjudicates and directs the annual awards show. Upcoming projects include coordinating a benefit performance for the grand re-opening of the renovated Liberace mansion, directing *The Addams Family* for Des Moines Playhouse, and adjudicating the 2015 national theatre festival for AACT.

Board Members by Regions

These persons' terms end in 2016 and 2017, so they will serve with those elected this year.

Region I

Bevie Lord, MA, Region Rep

Region II

Susanne Caviness, MD, Region Rep

Region III

Emily Anderson, MI, Member at Large

Joanne Berry, MI, Region Rep

Penelope Notter, MI, VP Education

Frank Peot, Secretary

Gary Walker, MI, Past President

Region IV

Rick Kerby, FL, Member at Large

Lynn Nelson, MS, Region Rep

Region V

Nancy Eppert, MO, Region Rep

Michael Spicer, KS, Member at Large

Jim Walker, SD, Member at Large

Region VI

Tracy Alexander, TX, Region Rep

Sara Phoenix, OK, Member at Large

Region VII

Donna Fisher, WY, Region Rep

Region VIII

Gil Savage, CA, Region Rep

Region IX

Jon Douglas Rake, WA, Region Rep

Chris Serface, WA, VP Planning/Development

Region X

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International

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What's Trending?

By Julie Crawford, AACT Executive Director

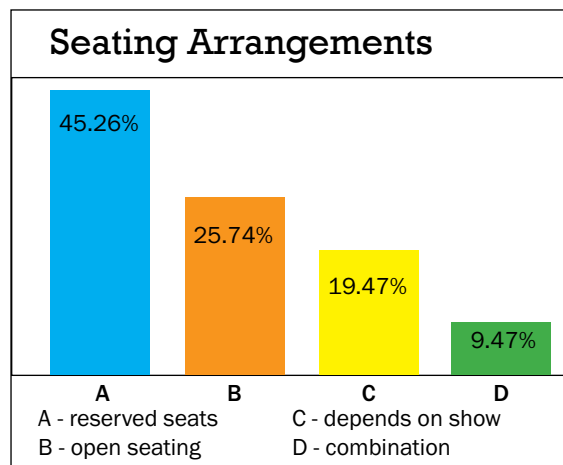
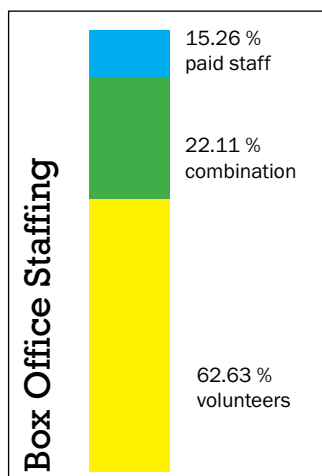
Trends can help you understand what is happening or assist you in preparing before a trend reaches your theatre.

Box Office practices was the subject of a survey distributed in late December. Responses were received from 190 theatres: 187 in 41 states and a U.S. Army base in Germany, plus two theatres in Canada and one in Baja California, Mexico. Although previous surveys have shown the majority of community theatres have no paid staff, more theatres with staff responded to this survey (59% of responses) while only 41% reported being all volunteer theatres that don't pay anyone.

Volunteers are hugely important in box office operations for community theatres. A volunteer manages the box office for 55.74% of responding theatres, including 25% of theatres that have one or more paid staff members. Besides the box office manager, volunteers staff 62.63% of the theatres' box offices, paid staff handle 15.26%, and 22.11% are staffed by a combination of volunteers and paid staff. Theatres understand that box office personnel need training; only 3.16% of theatres leave box office personnel to teach themselves or learn on the job. In most cases, training is provided by the box office manager (46.84% of theatres). Other theatres assign that training responsibility to the executive director (15.26%), the treasurer (8.95%), or the volunteer coordinator (5.79%). In the remaining 20% of theatres reporting, half are trained by volunteers in other positions and half by staff in other positions. Theatres are less formal when it comes to written box office procedures. Only 68.42% of theatres provide written procedure to box office staff.

Persons buying tickets enjoy **reserved seats** for some or all performances at 74.21% of theatres; 25.79% have open seating for all shows. Reserved or open seating depends on the show in 19.47% of theatres and 9.47% utilize a combination of reserved and open seating based on other factors. Several theatres that perform in more than one facility said they provide reserved seating at one facility and open seating at another. Waxahachie (TX) Community Theatre, Community Theatre of Miami Lakes (FL) -Main Street Players, The Drama Workshop in Cincinnati, OH, and Grove

Players in Downers Grove, IL have open seating, but reserve seats for season ticket holders or admit them into the house ahead of single ticket buyers. The Chester (NJ) Theatre Group of the Black River Playhouse reserves seats only for patrons who have made an annual donation in excess of ticket prices. Vicksburg (MS) Theatre Guild reserves only for those with special needs. Lake Country Playhouse in Hartland, WI noted it has "open seating except for a limited number in the first two rows, for an extra price."



Ticketing has gone digital and online. Tickets are sold online by 63.16% of theatres, with 82.5% of them using an online ticketing service and others using box office software. Specific vendors were named by almost 70% of theatres responding; most often mentioned were Vendini (18.18%), Brown Paper Tickets (13.64%), Arts People (12.12%), WinTix (8.33%), and Patron Manager (4.55%). Three theatres reporting have their own inhouse ticketing software or online ticketing system. Local businesses provide ticket outlets for 14.74% of theatres.

Credit card or PayPal payments for tickets are accepted by 90.53% of theatres, though several noted they don't due to the expense. A couple noted they add a fee unto the ticket purchase when a credit card is used. Others said they avoid the fees and hassles of credit cards by using a ticketing service. A number mentioned they take only cash or checks at the door, while others don't take credit cards on advance sales, but use square or another vendor to take credit cards at the door. ♦

Next up in "What's Trending" is senior theatre trends in community theatres. Check it out in the May-June issue of *Spotlight*.

To participate in "Trending" surveys, be sure your theatre's email is in the AACT database.

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Herb Henning Receives Spotlight Award

The **AACT Spotlight Award** partners AACT with theatres to recognize individuals and organizations for long or special service that has had a significant impact on the quality of their local theatres. Any AACT member theatre may apply to present the Spotlight Award.



Gai Jones (right) of Ojai Art Center Theatre represented AACT with a surprise presentation to Herb Hemming.

Herb Hemming was honored with the AACT Spotlight Award at the **Ojai Art Center Theatre** on January 14, 2015 at the theatre's event that previewed selected scenes from their

upcoming 2015 season. Ojai Art Center Theatre is located in Ojai, California, which is in a small east-west valley northwest of Los Angeles and east of Santa Barbara. Gai Jones, from the Ojai Art Center Theatre, represented AACT in presenting the award as a surprise to Herb.

Herb Hemming was recognized for his contributions made to promote and develop the highest standards for community theatre. Volunteering at Ojai Art Center Theatre has become a second career for Herb. His far-reaching vision has been instrumental in assisting the once struggling community theatre in becoming successful. Under Herb's direction as House Manager, season tickets sales have increased and attendance at each production has grown by leaps and bounds.

Herb has co-produced six fundraisers for the Ojai Art Center Theatre, and under his leadership the theatre has raised their sphere of influence within the community. Herb served as Chair of Theatre at Ojai Art Center for four years where he oversaw selecting season productions, theatre improvements, and the annual season review.

Herb retired from in 2006 after many years as Administrative Photo Editor at the Associated Press, and as Director of Assignments at Image Direct. Herb also served as Vice President of WireImage, a world-known digital entertainment photography agency.

Herb Hemming thanked AACT and Ojai Art Center Theatre for honoring him with the AACT Spotlight Award. He recounted the highlight of producing intergenerational productions, and said, "I am always amazed to see youth and old timers come into rehearsals without strong theatre skills, and then how they all look like theatre pros by performance time!" ♦

Bravo!

Oklahoma Community Theatre Association (OCTA) was recognized by Oklahoma Governor Mary Fallin with a Special Recognition Award during the 39th annual Governor's Arts Awards for making a unique contribution in support of the arts.



The Governor's Arts Awards is an annual event recognizing individuals and organizations for their contributions to the arts in Oklahoma. First awarded in 1975, the awards are presented by the Governor during a special ceremony at the State Capitol.

Oklahoma Arts Council executive director Amber Sharples said award recipients "exemplify the industrious nature and charitable spirit of citizens of our state." Sharples added, "What binds them together is their shared belief that arts enrich our lives and provide essential opportunities." ♦



Accepting the Special Recognition Award at the Oklahoma Governor's Arts Awards are (left to right) OCTA past treasurer Joe Freeman of Oklahoma City, OCTA past president Shonda Currell of Elk City, OCTA past president Diane Chapel of Edmond, OCTA past president Sally Barnes of Tulsa, OCTA President Debbie Sutton of Stillwater, and OCTA past president Sharon Burum of Duncan.

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Americans for the Arts
Arts Advocacy Day
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 March 23-24, 2015

Join arts advocates from across the country on March 23–24, 2015 in Washington, DC for the annual Arts Advocacy Day and make your voice heard! Arts Advocacy Day brings together a broad cross section of America's cultural and civic organizations, along with more than 500 grassroots advocates from across the country, to underscore the importance of developing strong public policies and appropriating increased public funding for the arts.

American icon, political activist, comedy genius, national medal of arts honoree, and Emmy winner (*All in the Family*) Norman Lear will deliver the 28th Annual Nancy Hanks Lecture on Arts and Public Policy on March 23.

Americans for the Arts
 1000 Vermont Avenue, NW, 6th Floor
 Washington, DC 20005

americansforthearts.org/events/arts-advocacy-day

New England Theatre Conference
18th Annual Aurand Harris Memorial Playwriting Award

New England Theatre Conference
 Aurand Harris Playwriting Award
 215 Knob Hill Drive
 Hamden, CT 06518-243

Created in 1997 to honor the late Aurand Harris (1915-1996) for his lifetime dedication to all aspects of professional theatre for young audiences, this contest is open to new full length plays for young audiences. No musicals or plays targeted for an adult audience. Plays must be unpublished and not have had a professional production.

A staged reading of the prize-winning scripts may be given, followed by critique and discussion.

Deadline: May 1, 2015 (postmark)

\$1,000 first prize, \$500 second prize

\$10 handling fee, except for current members of NETC

Details: netconline.org/aurand-harris-award.php

9th Annual Stage West Southwest Playwriting Competition

Stage West
 821 W Vickery Blvd
 Fort Worth, TX 76104-1144

For playwrights who have lived in Texas, New Mexico, Arkansas, Louisiana or Oklahoma for at least two years. Current residency not required. No restrictions on subject matter, format, cast size, or style, although plays with a cast size of six or less will have a better chance of production by Stage West.

One submission per playwright or writing team. Plays should not have been professionally produced.

Deadline: April 15, 2015 (postmark)

Winning playwright receives \$500 prize, plus a reading at Stage West. Runner-up also receives a reading.

\$10 entry fee.

Details: stagewest.org/annual-southwest-playwriting-competition

How do you make your box office user friendly?

Responses from Facebook

(facebook.com/AACT.org)

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Larry King, Executive Director
Poncan Theatre, Ponca City, OK

Responses from AACTList

(to sign up for AACTList, go to aact.org/aactlist)

We do everything in a real traditional way, with a box office manager in the box office Monday through Friday. He knows almost all our season ticket holders and patrons, and greets them with their names, knows their issues, and seating preferences.

John Rich, Managing Artistic Director
Regional Theatre of the Palouse, Pullman, WA

Hands down, the most user friendly upgrade we have made has been adding online ticket sales! 2014 was our first full season to use WinTix/WebTix software (for which we got an AACT discount). While our long-time season subscribers have been slower to make the transition, the three productions that were not included in the season subscription and therefore were totally general public sales had online sales in the 80% and 90% ranges over traditional box office purchases. Our last children's production literally sold out as I slept! But here is what I believe to be the key: we do not charge any convenience fees to use our online purchasing site. We absorb all the costs ourselves. I know from

personal experience that those convenience fees are a deterrent in a small community.

We have a small, 166 seat auditorium. I am employed as part-time box office personnel. We are not busy enough to justify paying me to be in that box office for extended hours. But the online ticketing allows people to purchase any time of the night or day and the expense to us for offering the service is cheaper than to man the box office.

As for our season subscribers, we offer them many options for reserving their seats: mail in, phone in, walk in, email, and now online. Some are becoming adventurous and using the online services, but many are seniors that don't even have computers. We continue to offer them personal service!

Natalie Smigel, Business Manager
Stage 212, LaSalle, IL

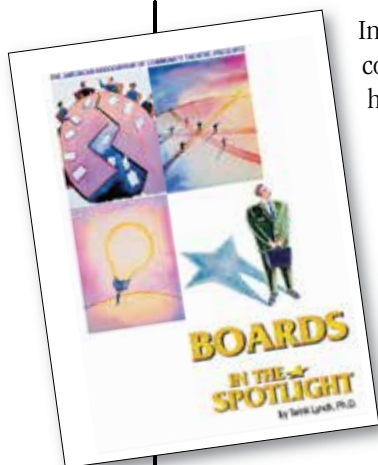
We use the philosophy that if you are in the building then we want you to be able to make a purchase. Therefore, even though you are not a subscriber (with early access to ticket purchases) you are allowed to buy tickets to the next production on the night you attend the current production.

Doesn't generate a ton of sales except for the hot shows, but it does generate an early buzz and those who like to plan ahead are very happy.

We still have a limited sales schedule because we generate \$40,000 dollars of donations with a benefit that as a donor you can purchase tickets any time of the year.

David R. Kilpatrick, Executive Director
La Crosse Community Theatre, La Crosse, WI

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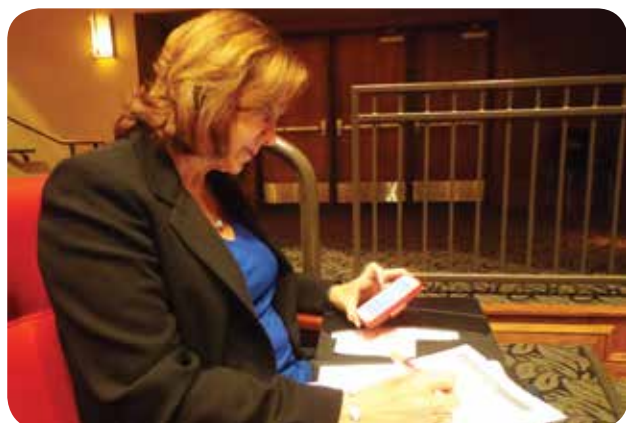
Ron Ziegler

California State Contact and Region VIII Representative Gil Savage (left) and AACT Board Member Liz Lydic (seated center) go over the schedule for the California AACTFest with Long Beach Playhouse staff members Madison Mooney and Andrew Vonderschmitt. The organizational meeting took place December 5, 2014 in Long Beach, CA.



Linda M. Lee

Members of the AACT Staff met for a staff retreat in Fort Worth, TX January 14 - 16, 2015. (left - right) Field Services Director Ron Ziegler, Advertising/Festival Services Specialist Darlene DeLorenzo, Office Support Manager Karen Matheny, Executive Director Julie Crawford, Marketing/Communications Director David Cockerell, and Conference Coordinator Jill Patchin (online).



Ron Ziegler

Festival Commissioner Wanda Schenk checks time of a production between shows at the Mississippi Community Theatre Festival, which occurred January 15 - 17 in Oxford, MS.



David Sokolowski

Pennsylvania State Contact Marsha Amato-Greenspan, AACT VP Festivals Kay Armstrong, Maryland State Contact Scott Bloom and adjudicator Bob Bartle pose for a photo at the Maryland state festival, held January 16 - 18 in Lexington Park, MD. Marsha was adjudicating at the festival and Kay served as AACT Festival Commissioner.



What Do We Really Want?

by Twink Lynch

Although the issue of ownership is often mentioned as an area of major conflict by community theatres with paid staff, ownership is really an issue from day one of the founding of a community theatre, whether there is paid staff or not. As noted in a previous article, the founders are usually a peer group in which everyone feels equal, and everyone in the group is also in the “inner loop” of decision-making (the real center of power). As long as everyone is working for a common goal like getting the show up, individual needs will often remain beneath the surface. But it usually doesn’t take too long before areas of conflict emerge. These often concern play selection (we’ve got

Such meetings left us worn out and angry — and sometimes they occurred on a weekly basis!

How do we get beyond the conflict and on the road to consensus-building and growth of the theatre program?

to do *Hello, Dolly!* next year — hidden agenda: because I want to play Dolly) or director selection (I want Beth to direct two of our four shows next year because she always casts me) or budgeting (how come Jim’s production gets a budget of \$1,500 and mine only gets \$600?) or scheduling the use of a shared space (I have to have the main stage for four weeks or my show won’t be ready for opening night, and I don’t care if the children’s production was scheduled in during that time) or, in the case of fundraising projects, since I did all the work on the garage/bake sale (or whatever), I get to say where the money is spent. In each of the above cases, an individual’s needs are being placed in higher priority than the greater good of the community theatre itself.

The truth is, some community theatre groups are founded to serve the individual needs — dare I say, “ego needs”? — of their founders. These are called “vanity theatres,” and they usually die when the founders leave or get burned out or pass on to those great footlights in the sky. Even in groups that have more lofty goals, however, conflicts do arise long before paid staff are in the picture (and, unfortunately, long after some paid staff have come and gone). I well remember five-hour Board meetings and wrangling over play selection and whether money should be spent on sets for this show or on advertising for the next.

So, how do we get beyond the conflict and on the road to consensus-building and growth of the theatre program? First, there has to be more pain in doing things the “old” way than in learning to do it a new way. The new way is scary because it means I have to learn to trust people to do the “right thing” (translation: MY right thing). But I and others in the group have got to realize finally that we don’t have time to do all the tasks ourselves. We’re tired of building and schlepping sets all over town; and we’re tired of running from mall to mall to put posters in store windows; and we can’t squeeze one more meeting into an already crammed schedule. We have to admit our collective fatigue before we’ll be willing to go through the pain of letting go. Then, if we want the theatre program to continue, we’ve got to involve others in meaningful ways, and we have to learn to delegate not only tasks but also real authority and power to make decisions (even if they have to be made without our indispensable input).

One of the best ways I know to design a system of shared power is to establish an overriding mission statement plus goals and objectives for the theatre and then create written job descriptions for everyone in the organization. Divide up the work into task clusters that make sense — we do it all the time in production. Write down what each job is called, list

Divide up the work into clusters that make sense - we do it all the time in production

each job’s essential tasks and responsibilities; estimate the time commitment needed; identify to whom each person is responsible. Prepare time lines for reports and/or completion of tasks. Assign budgeted dollars, if appropriate. (Does this sound familiar? It’s called “planning” and “organizing”!)

One key piece of each job description should be “skills, experience, training required” for the person filling the job. If that person has the necessary skills, experience

continued on page 37

New Roles

Bradenton, FL - **The Manatee Players, Inc.** is pleased to announce its hiring of **Michele Slaughter**, who joins their team as Director of Marketing - a brand new position within the organization. She will be responsible for developing and implementing marketing, public relations, and advertising strategies for the organization. Prior to her appointment, Michele was the Marketing & Creative Services Manager for the Bradenton Herald for twelve years before joining the Manatee Chamber of Commerce as their Communications Director. She joined the Manatee Players staff in September 2014.

Grand Rapids, MI - **The Actors' Theatre** announces the hiring of **Kyle Los** as Managing Director. Kyle has served on the Actors' Theatre board since the beginning of 2012, and has appeared in many local productions, most notably in the award-winning role of Thomas in *Venus in Fur*. He succeeds Debbie Playfold, who departed the company at the end of September, and joins Director of Operations Chris Carnevale as the second member of the theatre's staff. Prior to joining Actors' Theatre, Kyle managed GRid70, a collaborative design hub, which hosts creators from Amway, Wolverine World Wide, Steelcase, Meijer and Pennant Health Alliance. He began his new position in November 2014.

Plano, TX - **McKinney Youth Theatre** announced that **Hollie Hongosh** has been hired to serve as the inaugural Managing Director, effective December 2014. Hollie has been a director with Plano Children's Theatre, McKinney Youth Theatre, and Frisco Youth Theatre for the past three years and is charged with creating the theatre's annual program and managing day-to-day operations. Prior to joining Plano Children's Theatre in 2011, she was the Youth Program Manager at Olmsted Performing Arts in Cleveland, Ohio. She earned a degree in international business, French, and operatic vocal performance from Wittenberg University and also toured nationally with the acclaimed Wittenberg choir. ♦

Artie's Advocacy Tip



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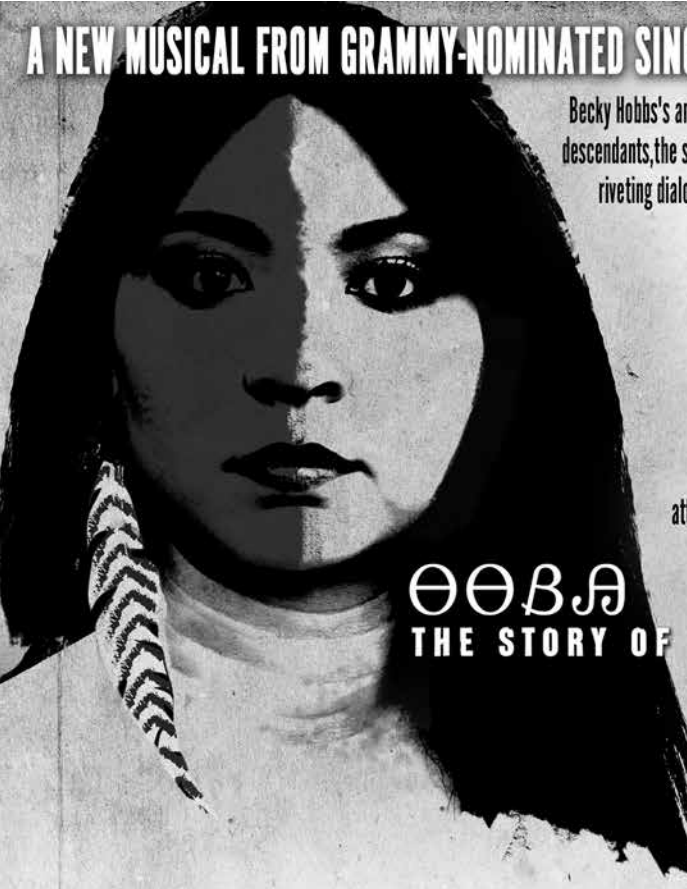
and training, why should we be reluctant to turn over the responsibility to him or her? If people serving on the play reading committee are people with degrees in theatre (perhaps) or if they see lots of plays in lots of places, not just community theatre but professional theatre as well, or if they are people who can visualize the action and the setting of a play, and if they are people who know our community well and know the resources available to us, why should we worry that they will make horrendous choices? Do we have so many selfish people involved that they will always choose plays only for themselves? Or are **we** so selfish that we cannot stand to see someone else get to do a lead in a show (that we didn't help choose), even one for which we are not well suited?

A community theatre with its act together (long range plan, annual objectives, job descriptions, time lines, chain of command, etc.) can develop trust in its individual members to do the "right thing," because the "right thing" has been agreed upon ahead of time. **Goals are driving the theatre program (not individual ego needs), and excellence is the standard against which everyone and every show is measured.**

If you find that you are in a group that can't seem to agree on anything, look to the power issues that are at stake. In the worst cases, your theatre may need a conflict mediator to help you face the issues. In milder cases, sometimes just acknowledging that some of you have conflicting needs can help. It is ridiculous to assume we've all joined the theatre group for the same reasons (needs) — conflict is, therefore, inevitable. But conflict need not destroy or impede the group if it is acknowledged for what it is and if the needs of the theatre are committed to as absolutely primary. ♦

Twink Lynch wrote a regular column on boardmanship for Spotlight for many years. Her early articles are compiled into a still relevant book for boards: Boards in the Spotlight. See ad on page 33 for ordering information.

Reprinted from Boards in the Spotlight (page 51). Originally appeared in Spotlight September, 1995.



A NEW MUSICAL FROM GRAMMY-NOMINATED SINGER-SONGWRITER BECKY HOBBS AND NICK SWEET

Becky Hobbs's and Nick Sweet's interpretive story of Nanyehi is a world-class musical production. As one of her descendants, the story of Nancy Ward is both inspirational and deeply personal to me. The stirring compositions, riveting dialogue and modern choreography make this a must-see piece of musical theater. Cherokee Nation history enthusiasts and theater fans will be mesmerized with Becky's wonderful creation.

- Bill John Baker, Principal Chief, Cherokee Nation, Tahlequah, OK

While Nancy Ward's history is intriguing and the basis for an exciting musical and Becky Hobbs original songs tell a haunting story, the 'cry for peace' that Ward made during the Revolutionary War era is one that still resonates today.

- D. Ray Smith, The Oak Ridge, Oak Ridge, TN

NANYEHI set several attendance records in Kingsport, TN during its 2014 run: the single night attendance record, the combined attendance record for any Kingsport Theatre Guild production in 67 years, and a new record for the venue, The Kingsport Renaissance Arts Center & Theatre, which also hosts professional touring acts.

- Tina Radtke, Executive Director, Kingsport Theatre Guild

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THE STORY OF NANCY WARD

NANYEHI

For more info and to license, contact: becky@nanyehi.com or call 615 383-0041 www.nanyehi.com Professionally recorded accompaniment CD available

When	Who/What	Where	Information
Mar 4-8	Southeastern Theatre Conference ★ Region IV Festival	TN Chattanooga Region IV	941-488-1115 www.setc.org
Mar 5-7	South Dakota Theatre Association ★ State Festival 2015	SD Sioux Falls	605-940-5147 siouxfallstheatre.com
Mar 6-8	Indiana Community Theatre Association ★ State AACTFest 2015	IN South Bend	574-234-1112 www.icticta.com
Mar 12-15	Washington State Community Theatre Association ★ Kaleidoscope 2015	WA Richland	509-521-3449 www.wscta.org
Mar 13-15	Pennsylvania Association of Community Theatres ★ PACTFest 2015	PA Gettysburg	302-547-5998 www.pactheatres.com/
Mar 14	Delaware Theatre Association ★ DTA Fest 2015	DE Milford	443-320-3292 www.dtafest.org
Mar 20-21	Oregon Community Theatre Alliance ★ Oregon Community Theatre Festival 2015	OR Forest Grove	503-359-5349 www.facebook.com/pages/Oregon-Community-Theatre-Alliance/11102908229826
Mar 17-21	Texas Nonprofit Theatres, Inc. (TNT) ★ AACTFest 2015	TX Lewisville	817-731-2238 www.texas theatres.org
Mar 18-22	Minnesota Association of Community Theatres ★ MACTFest 2015	MN Cokato	952-884-9676 www.mact.net
Mar 27-29	Community Theatre Association of Michigan ★ Michigan AACTFest 2015	MI Owasso	989-413-4988 www.communitytheatre.org
Mar 27-28	Oregon Community Theatre Alliance ★ Region IX Community Theatre Festival 2015	OR McMinville Region IX	941-488-1115 www.gallerytheater.org/
Apr 8-12	Theatre New Mexico ★ Region VI AACTFest	NM Albuquerque Region VI	501-626-5971 www.theatrenm.org
Apr 10-11	Iowa Community Theatre Association ★ Iowa AACTFest 2015	IA Waterloo	319-235-0367 www.iowacomunitytheatres.org
Apr 16-19	Association of Region III ★ Region III AActfest	MI Midland Region III	989-486-1762 www.region3aact.org
Apr 17-19	Eastern States Theater Association ★ Region II AACTFest	DE La Plata	301-751-2736 www.estafest.org
Apr 23	Arizona Community Theatre Association ★ Arizona State Festival	AZ Flagstaff	928-451-1409 www.theatrikos.com
Apr 23-26	Region V Association ★ Region V AACTFest	IA Newton Region V	641-792-0690 www.iowacomunitytheatres.org
Apr 24-25	Arizona Community Theatre Association ★ Region VIII AACTFest	AZ Flagstaff Region VIII	928-451-1409 www.theatrikos.com

★ Indicates festival in the AACTFest 2015 Cycle

For dates farther ahead, check the website: www.aact.org

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